

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method for performing a category search to identify categories of items that
2 relate to a search term, the method comprising:

3 receiving at least one search term;

4 comparing the search term with a hierarchy of category identifiers to determine
5 whether matches exist;

6 comparing the search term with terms related to one or more categories to determine
7 whether matches exist; and

8 displaying at least a category identifier based on the matches that are determined to
9 exist with the hierarchy and the terms.

1 2. The method of claim 1 wherein:

2 receiving at least one search term comprises:

3 receiving several search terms, and

4 grouping the search terms received as a single string;

5 comparing the search term with the hierarchy of category identifiers
6 comprises comparing the single string of search terms with the hierarchy of category
7 identifiers to determine whether matches exist; and

8 comparing the search term with the terms related to one or more categories
9 comprises comparing the single string of search terms with the terms related to one or
10 more categories to determine whether matches exist.

1 3. The method of claim 1 wherein the terms related to one or more categories
2 include a name and a description of a web site corresponding to a category.

1 4. The method of claim 1 wherein the hierarchy of category identifiers comprises
2 an ordered list of category names arranged in order from broad categories to narrow
3 categories with the narrowest category being a final category name.

1 5. The method of claim 1 wherein displaying at least a category identifier
2 includes communicating at least a category identifier based on the matches that are
3 determined to exist with the hierarchy and the terms.

1 6. The method of claim 1 wherein displaying at least a category identifier
2 includes displaying several category identifiers, the method further comprising ranking the
3 category identifiers based on a number of the matches that are determined to exist and at least
4 one of locations and types of the matches.

1 7. The method of claim 6 wherein ranking the category identifiers based on the
2 location of the matches includes ranking the category identifiers based on the relative
3 location of the matches within the hierarchy of category identifiers.

1 8. The method of claim 6, wherein the ranking the category identifiers based on
2 the types of the matches includes ranking the category identifiers based on whether the
3 matches occur with at least one of the terms related to one or more categories or with the
4 hierarchy of category identifiers.

1 9. The method of claim 8 wherein category identifiers that include matches that
2 occur with both the hierarchy of category identifiers and the terms related to one or more
3 categories are ranked higher than category identifiers that include matches that occur with
4 only one of the hierarchy of category identifiers and the terms related to one or more
5 categories.

1 10. The method of claim 6 wherein category identifiers that include matches that
2 occur with more than one type are ranked higher than category identifiers that include
3 matches that occur within only one of the types.

1 11. The method of claim 6 wherein category identifiers that include matches that
2 occur with the hierarchy of category identifiers are ranked higher than category identifiers
3 that include matches that occur with the terms related to one or more categories.

1 12. The method of claim 6 wherein the hierarchy of category identifiers comprises
2 an ordered list of category names arranged in order from broad categories to narrow
3 categories with the narrowest category being a final category name such that category
4 identifiers that include matches that occur with the final category name of the hierarchy of
5 category names are ranked higher than category names that include matches that occur at a
6 location other than the final category name.

1 13. The method of claim 1 wherein the items comprise web sites.

1 14. A method for performing a search to identify items and categories of items
2 that relate to a search term, the method comprising:
3 receiving at least one search term;
4 comparing the search term with a list of recommended items to determine whether
5 matches exist;
6 comparing the search term with previously performed searches to determine whether
7 matches exist;
8 comparing the search term with a hierarchy of category identifiers and terms related
9 to one or more categories to determine whether matches exist; and
10 displaying results based on matches that are determined to exist.

1 15. The method of claim 14 further comprising comparing the search term with an
2 electronic information store that includes full text of different web pages from different web
3 sites to determine whether matches exist.

1 16. The method of claim 15 wherein receiving at least one search term comprises:
2 receiving several search terms; and
3 grouping the search terms received as a single string.

1 17. The method of claim 15 wherein the items comprise web sites and displaying
2 results comprises displaying a list of recommended sites, a list of related searches, a list of
3 category identifiers, and a list of web site identifiers.

1 18. The method of claim 15 further comprising conducting a world wide web
2 search using the search term when less than a threshold number of matches occurs.

1 19. The method of claim 18 further comprising conducting a search of an
2 electronic information store that includes full text of proprietary content.

1 20. The method of claim 14 wherein the items comprise web sites.

1 21. A computer program, stored on a computer readable medium for performing a
2 category search to identify categories of items that relate to a search term, comprising
3 instructions for:

4 receiving at least one search term;

5 comparing the search term with a hierarchy of category identifiers to determine
6 whether matches exist;

7 comparing the search term with terms related to one or more categories to determine
8 whether matches exist; and

9 displaying at least a category identifier based on the matches that are determined to
10 exist with the hierarchy and the terms.

1 22. The computer program of claim 21 wherein the computer readable medium
2 comprises a propagated signal.

1 23. The computer program of claim 22 wherein the propagated signal comprises a
2 carrier wave.

1 24. The computer program of claim 23 wherein items comprise web sites and the
2 terms related to one or more categories include a name and a description of a web site
3 corresponding to a category.

1 25. A computer program, stored on a computer readable medium for performing a
2 search to identify web sites and categories of web sites that relate to a search term,
3 comprising instructions for:

4 receiving at least one search term;
5 comparing the search term with a list of recommended web sites to determine
6 whether matches exist;
7 comparing the search term with previously performed searches to determine whether
8 matches exist;
9 comparing the search term with a hierarchy of category identifiers and terms related
10 to one or more categories to determine whether matches exist; and
11 displaying results based on matches that are determined to exist.

1 26. The computer program of claim 25 wherein the computer readable medium
2 comprises a propagated signal.

1 27. The computer program of claim 26 wherein the propagated signal comprises a
2 carrier wave.

1 28. The computer program of claim 27 further comprising instructions for
2 comparing the search term with an electronic information store that includes full text of
3 different web pages from different web sites to determine whether matches exist.

1 29. The computer program of claim 28 wherein the instructions for receiving at
2 least one search term comprise instructions for:

3 receiving several search terms; and
4 grouping the search terms received as a single string.

1 30. The computer program of claim 28 wherein the instructions for displaying
2 results comprises instructions for displaying a list of recommended sites, a list of related
3 searches, a list of category identifiers, and a list of web site identifiers.

1 31. The computer program of claim 28 further comprising instructions for
2 conducting a world wide web search using the search term when less than a threshold

1 32. The computer program of claim 31 further comprising instructions for
2 conducting a search of an electronic information store that includes full text of proprietary
3 content.